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Committees
Economic Development, Small
Business and Regulatory Reform VC
Families and Human Services VC
Government Operations
Health Policy

The Jacobs Report

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, October 15, 2004

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FLU VACCINE INFORMATION

As has been widely reported by the media, the United States is experiencing a shortage of flu vaccines for the upcoming influenza season. Like every other state, Michigan will likely experience a lack of available vaccines.

While this is an important concern for the health of our state, it is by no means a reason to panic. On a national level and here in Michigan, public health officials are working to ensure that those who need a vaccine most will receive one. Further, the Michigan Department of Community Health is working to help those individuals that are not vaccinated understand how to protect themselves from the flu.

The Centers for Disease Control have issued recommendations for who should be vaccinated this season. Each of the following priority groups that are listed are considered to be of equal priority:

- All children aged 6 to 23 months,
- Adults aged 65 and older,
- Persons aged two to 64 years with underlying chronic medical conditions,
- All women who will be pregnant during influenza season,
- Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities,
- Children, aged 6 months to 18 years of age, on chronic aspirin therapy
- Health-care workers with direct patient care, and
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children less than six months of age.

If you have any questions whether you are included in the priority groups, please contact your physician. Also, it is important to note that your physician may be able to recommend alternatives to the influenza vaccine that also provide protection from the flu.

Regardless of being in a priority population or not, all citizens can practice healthy habits to reduce the risk of getting the flu. Simple actions, like covering your mouth and nose and cleaning your hands often, can stop germs and prevent illnesses and reduce sick days. Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website for more information, www.cdc.gov/germstopper.

Thank you for your cooperation, and if you need more information please visit the Michigan Department of Community Health's influenza webpage at <http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132--82930--,00.html>.

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NATIONWIDE: MEDICAID SPENDING EXCEEDS EDUCATION

A recent report from the National Association of State Budget Offices (NASBO) shows that for the first time, the costs of each state's Medicaid programs may surpass funding for education.

For Fiscal Year (FY) 2003, Medicaid costs and education costs were nearly tied at around 21 percent. Since Medicaid's growth in recent years has far exceeded the growth of education costs, Medicaid should trump education by this year's end. As states struggle to close budget gaps and maintain education funding, ballooning Medicaid costs outpace total state expenditure growth. Medicaid poses a threat of unsustainable strain even as the adverse effects of recession begin to dwindle.

Michigan differs slightly from most other states. The education portion of our budget took up more than 30 percent of funding while Medicaid accounted for 20 percent. Michigan schools rely almost entirely on the state for money, while many in other states' schools lean more heavily on local taxes/entities to pay for their K-12 education.

However, spending for higher education has decreased in the last couple years. In FY 2002, it came in at 6.3 percent of the budget while in FY 2003 it came in at 5.2 percent.

It should be noted that nationally, in 1987, Medicaid made up less than 10 percent of state budgets while education was at 23 percent.

National Governors Association Director Raymond Scheppach accounted for the change in proportion by pointing out that the federal government requires states to spend a certain amount on Medicaid while education spending is entirely a state matter. Until federal policy is changed, Medicaid will continue to pressure state budgets severely.

"Since Medicaid is a federal entitlement and education is discretionary, Medicaid will trump education going forward," Scheppach said.

BLACKOUT PREVENTION: MPSC TO EVALUATE MICHIGAN POWER SUPPLY

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) this week issued an order that directs the MPSC staff, representatives of the power generation community and other interested parties to accumulate, assess and evaluate data on the construction of new generation capacity. The Commission also directed these parties to recommend policies that facilitate the development of new base-load generation facilities in Michigan. In addition, the MPSC staff was directed to file a status report by July 1, 2005 and a final report on these issues by Jan. 1, 2006.

"Today, the Public Service Commission is taking a vital step to ensure that Michigan maintains a reliable supply of power in the future," said MPSC Chair J. Peter Lark. "As we learned from the blackout last year, the time to prepare for electric reliability is before a problem exists, not after. Although Michigan has added many new generating units designed for short-term peaking, the state has not built a new base-load plant for 16 years. These plants, which form the backbone of our supply system, are aging. Many are over 50 years old. That is why the Commission is taking the first step today to investigate the need for future resources and the means to obtain them."

This week's order specifically directs those working on this investigation to:

- analyze all power supply cost recovery filings for five-year load growth forecasts, system requirements and other data on the need for resource additions;

- review electric utility rate case filings and annual reports for information on property held for future use;

- meet with employees within the electric power industry responsible for load growth forecasting, resource additions and siting issues;

- propose membership in a Generation Capacity Addition Forum (GCAF) to be approved by the Commission.

The GCAF would review data and advise the Commission on resource addition policy matters. The report required by the Commission will address:

the anticipated short, intermediate and long-term demand for power;

the ability to meet projected demands from existing resources;

potential resource options that are available, if additional resources are needed recommendations.

In addition, Lark noted that renewable resource generators will be included in the investigation into the need for additional capacity.

The MPSC is an agency within the Department of Labor & Economic Growth.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Office Hours:

HAZEL PARK

Tuesday, October 19

2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Hazel Park Community Center

GERONTOLOGY PANEL DISCUSSION

Monday, November 8, 10:30 AM – 12:15 PM

Botsford Commons Community

Town Commons Dining Room

21300 Archwood Circle

Farmington Hills

All Michigan legislation can be tracked at <http://www.legislature.michigan.gov/>.

State Senator Gilda Jacobs represents the 14th Senate District, which includes Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Franklin, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak Township, Southfield, and Southfield Township. She is the Minority Vice Chair of the Families & Human Services Committee and the Economic Development, Small Business & Regulatory Reform Committee. She also serves on the Government Operations and Health Policy Committees.

Constituents of the 14th District may contact Senator Jacobs at sengjacobs@senate.michigan.gov or toll-free at 1-888-937-4453.

This newsletter is produced in single-space form in order to save paper and transmission costs.

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